

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

RECREATION ACTIVITIES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Bicycling – “Mountain Biking” on Single-track Trails and Off-road Trails

Desired Experiences and Site Selection Considerations

Mountain and off-road biking involves riding bicycles over varying terrain, using purpose-built bicycles with enhanced durability and performance for rough terrain. Mountain biking is technically challenging and physically strenuous and can include constructed courses with a range of obstacles. Off-road biking occurs on more gently rolling trails or primitive roads and is more suitable for a broader range of abilities. Off-road biking can be done with a variety of bicycles with wider tires, including hybrids. Recently, the development of bikes with very wide tires – “fat bikes” – has enabled cyclists to enjoy the activity during winter. Although they can be ridden in any season, fat-tire bike riding in the winter has grown rapidly recently as their price has decreased and the number of trails groomed for their use in the winter has grown.

The speed of mountain and off-road bicycles can be a source of conflict with slower recreationalists (e.g., hikers) and their quiet nature can be a source of conflict with horses that can be spooked by silent, quick movements.

Notable Differences in Participation or Opportunities Across the State

Participation rates of mountain and off-road bicycling are higher near more populated areas with most participants travelling some distance to access trails. Constructed mountain bike trails meet layout and design specifications that require they be built by hand or with specialized equipment and require a close relationship between the land manager and the volunteer groups who build them, or specialized contractors to construct the trails. Thus, availability of trails specifically constructed for mountain biking is limited. However, there are more than 20 chapters of mountain bike-focused volunteer groups across the state, most of whom engage in trail building on public lands to create their desired riding experiences. Off-road trails are often located on different types of primitive roads and are not limited to specific parts of the state.

Notable Times of the Year of High or Low Participation

Fewer biting insects and lower temperatures in the fall generally drive the highest participation rates of the year for mountain and off-road biking, while late spring and summer are also popular. Winter biking on fat-tire bikes is increasingly popular. Bikers are generally discouraged from using trails during the spring thaw, especially in areas with poorly drained soils, to prevent rutting.

Participation

Participation Rate and Frequency

Based on a 2016 survey of Wisconsin residents conducted for the development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), it is estimated that 11% of adult Wisconsin residents

Days/year	% of Mountain Bikers
1 to 2	20
3 to 9	30
10 to 29	25
30 or more	25
Total	100%



participate in mountain biking (information on off-road bicycling was not collected). This ranked #50 out of 64 activities evaluated.

In terms of frequency, participants that engaged in mountain biking did so about in line with the average of other activities (it ranked #29 in frequency out of 64 activities evaluated).

Estimated Trends

Fat-tire biking has seen growth and is projected to continue to grow as the population continues to seek ways to stay active throughout the winter (Sharp 2017). Another reason for the anticipated growth is the multifunctionality and growth in production of fat-tire bikes. Between 2013 and 2014 the number of companies making fat bikes doubled, creating the fastest-growing market segment in the cycling industry, as people were riding them in a variety of settings (e.g., logging roads) and no longer just during winter (Heil 2015).

Demographics

As can be seen from the SCORP survey results in the table below, participants in mountain biking in Wisconsin tend to be young to middle-aged men.

Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
Age	18-29	18	32
	30-39	15	24
	40-49	16	21
	50-59	9	14
	60-69	5	7
	70 and older	2	2
	Total	--	100
Gender	Female	9	39
	Male	14	61
	Total	--	100
Residence	Rural	11	46
	Urban	12	54
	Total	--	100

References

Heil, N. 2015. How fat bikes became the hottest trend in cycling. *Outside*. August, 2015.
<https://www.outsideonline.com/1997971/fat-bike>

Sharp, D. 2017. 'Fat bikes' allow cyclists to conquer winter snow. Associated Press. March 10, 2017.
<https://www.apnews.com/4f05ef17318943368b225cc50e22ac46>

